

Message Text

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14-11

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3925

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PN PFOR PQ

SUBJECT: PANAMANIAN NOTE CONCERNING INCIDENT AT FORT CLAYTON

1. THIS MESSAGE CONTAINS EMBASSY'S FREE TRANSLATION OF FIRST PERSON NOTE FROM VICE MINISTER CARLOS OZORES CONCERNING AN INCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED AT THE FORT CLAYTON GATE MAY 10 BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AND U.S. MILITARY POLICE. THE MP GUARD AT FORT CLAYTON'S MAIN GATE STOPPED A GN POLICE TRUCK AND UPON DETERMINING THAT THE TWO OCCUPANTS WERE BEARING ARMS, INFORMED THEM IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 7, GENERAL RELATIONS AGREEMENT, BETWEEN THE U.S. AND PANAMA MAY 18, 1942, AND PARA 5E USSOUTHCOM REG 1-7, DTD 7 FEB 72, THAT THEY COULD NOT ENTER THE INSTALLATION BEARING ARMS. THEY WERE ASKED TO MAKE A U-TURN AND DEPART THE INSTALLATION. HOWEVER, THEY CONTINUED INTO FORT CLAYTON AND WERE STOPPED BY AN MP PATROL 200 YARDS INSIDE THE BASE. THEY AGAIN REFUSED TO LEAVE THE INSTALLATION AND WERE DISARMED. THEY WERE HELD ON THE SPOT UNTIL THE ARRIVAL OF GN LTC. AYALA IN WHOSE CUSTODY THEY WERE RELEASED. FOR FULL DETAILS SEE SERIOUS INCIDENT REPORTS NO. CZ PQ 198-75011 AND NO. CZ PQ 189-750144.

2. FOLLOWING IS FREE TRANSLATION OF FULL TEXT OF FOREIGN MINISTRY NOTE, WHICH WAS RECEIVED COB MAY 15.

BEGIN QUOTE. DREU-120/925 MAY 15, 1975

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MR. AMBASSADOR

I HAVE THE HONOR TO ADDRESS MYSELF TO YOUR EXCELLENCY IN ORDER TO BRING TO YOUR ATTENTION A SERIOUS INCIDENT OF WHICH LT. COL. FLORENCIO FLOREZ, CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD, HAS INFORMED ME, WHICH TEXTUALLY IS THE FOLLOWING:

'IT IS MY DUTY TO ADDRESS YOUR EXCELLENCY IN ORDER TO INFORM YOU ABOUT AN INCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED SATURDAY, THE 10TH OF THE PRESENT MONTH ABOUT 11:00 IN THE MORNING AT THE ENTRANCE GATE OF FORT CLAYTON, PANAMA CANAL ZONE, INVOLVING SOME MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AND UNITS OF THE ZONE MILITARY POLICE.

'AN AUTO PATROL OF THE NATIONAL GUARD, OCCUPIED BY DULY UNIFORMED PERSONNEL AND WITH ITS IDENTIFICATION CLEARLY VISIBLE, ARRIVED AT THE AFOREMENTIONED GATE AND, AFTER WAITING THE SIGNAL TO CONTINUE AHEAD FROM THE SENTRY WHO WAS ON DUTY THERE, WAS INEXPLICABLY DETAINED.

'IN A HIGHLY BRUSQUE FORM THE MEMBERS OF THIS INSTITUTION WERE OBLIGED TO GET OUT OF THE VEHICLE. THEY WERE DISARMED, INSULTED AND THREATENED WITH FIREARMS. THEY WERE TREATED AS PRISONERS OF WAR AND WERE DENIED THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMUNICATE BY RADIO WITH THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD.

'I WISH TO POINT OUT THAT THIS ENTIRE OFFENSIVE OPERATION WAS DIRECTED BY AN OFFICER, A THING WHICH MAKES THE EVENT EVEN MORE CRITICIZABLE.'

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS EXTREMELY SERIOUS THE BEHAVIOR OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY IN THE CANAL ZONE TOWARD THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF PANAMA AND ENERGETICALLY PROTESTS IT. MOREOVER, IT BELIEVES THAT THE INCIDENT DESCRIBED BY LT. COL. FLORENCIO FLOREZ MERITS AN EXHAUSTIVE AND COMPLETE INVESTIGATION BY THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE CANAL ZONE AND THE EXEMPLARY PUNISHMENT OF THOSE WHO CAUSED THIS SHAMEFUL DEED, WHICH IN THESE TIMES IN WHICH CONVERSATIONS ARE GOING FORTH BETWEEN PLENIPOTENTIARIES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO CONCLUDE A NEW CANAL TREATY TO ELIMINATE THE EXISTING CAUSES OF CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS, REPRESENTS A MARKED RETROCESSION AND AN ELEMENT UNCLASSIFIED

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WHICH BETRAYS SUCH INTENTION.

THE MINISTRY HARBORS PARTICULARLY THE SUSPICION THAT THE CONDUCT OF THE FORT CLAYTON MILITARY HAD THE INTENTION OF CREATING AN INCIDENT WHICH COULD PUT IN DANGER THE GOOD COURSE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS NOW IN PROCESS.

CONSEQUENTLY, I ASK YOUR EXCELLENCY TO INFORM ME CONCERNING THE

MEASURES BY WHICH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES WILL GIVE
SATISFACTION (DESAGRAVIO) TO THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA CONCERNING THE
DENUNCIATION WHICH I MAKE.

I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO REPEAT TO YOUR EXCELLENCY THE ASSURANCES
OF MY MOST DISTINGUISHED CONSIDERATION.

SIGNED
CARLOS OZORES
VICE MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS. END QUOTE

3. SPANISH TEXT OF NOTE BEING POUCHED. EMBASSY IS PREPARING A
REPLY TO THE VICE MINISTER'S NOTE.
JORDEN

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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